

Caring for Those Who Served

Posted At : February 12, 2013 2:33 PM | Posted By : TexasLRL

Related Categories: Texas history

Second in a series of posts about the 33rd Legislature, held 100 years ago. Read the first post [here](#).

One hundred years ago, the U.S. observed the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Civil War. Many of those who fought in the war were still alive, and taking care of these aging veterans had been an ongoing issue since the end of the war.

Walter Acker was the last Confederate veteran to serve in the Texas Legislature.
(Photo courtesy of the State Preservation Board)

In 1913, the Texas Confederate Museum was located in the west wing of the Capitol, in what is now the Agricultural Museum/meeting room.

Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, chair of the Veterans Affairs and Military Installations Committee, presenting a [Quilt of Valor](#) to honoree SPC Cody Miller.

Sandra Smith, Adria Garcia, Cassaundra St. John, and Victoria Wegwert with the [F7 Group](#), which works to empower female veterans and their families

Confederate Pensions

Photos by Amy Batheja except as noted.

While Union Army veteran pensions were covered by the federal government, care of Confederate veterans was left up to individual states. In 1899, Texas began issuing pensions to indigent and disabled former Confederate soldiers. The pension rolls grew every year; in 1905 there were approximately 7,680 pensioners on the rolls, and by November of 1913 there were 14,980. The number of pensioners would reach 18,128 by the following year (1914). This increase was due, in part, to the expansion in 1912 of benefits to more recent residents of the state.

The law allowed for a distribution of \$8.33 per month (\$100/year). However, the law also allowed that if not enough money was available, the veterans would receive a pro rata amount of what was available. Although the legislature allotted \$500,000 each year to the fund, it was not enough; pensioners received just \$42 for the entire year ending in 1913.

The situation improved when Texas voters passed a [constitutional amendment](#) in 1912 approving an ad valorem tax that would specifically go toward funding Confederate pensions. In 1917, for example, pensioners received \$22 in one quarter (approx. \$88/year). The tax was repealed in 1979, and language about the pension fund was [removed from the Constitution](#) in 1999, as part of a clean-up of "duplicative, executed, obsolete, archaic, and ineffective provisions."

- Confederate Homes for Men and Women housed those unable to care for themselves; read more about the [men's home](#) and the [women's home](#) in the Handbook of Texas Online.
- For more information about the full history of pension amounts, visit [this link](#) at the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.
- Search the online index of pension applications:
<https://www.tsl.state.tx.us/apps/arc/pensions/>

Caring for Veterans in 2013

During this session, legislators have introduced a number of bills and resolutions regarding veterans. Many of them are related to taxes, especially the homestead property tax exemption amendment passed in 2011. View them all by [searching TLO](#); set the bill type to "all" and search by subjects "Military & Veterans (10535)" and "Resolutions - Constitutional Amendments (10661)."

Other bills include:

- facilitating the occupational licensing of veterans and their spouses ([SB 162](#) by Senator Leticia Van de Putte and [HB 45](#) by Representative Dan Flynn; [SB 242](#) by Senator John Carona; [HB 757](#) by Representative Joe Pickett)
- adding disabled veterans to the list of business owners who may be certified as having a historically underutilized business ([SB 116](#) by Senator Juan Hinojosa and [HB 194](#) by Representatives Joe Farias and Bennett Ratliff)
- establishing veteran resource centers at state colleges and universities ([HB 171](#) by Representative Roberto Alonzo)
- granting leave to new veterans who are employed by the state so they may tend to matters related to civilian reintegration ([SB 442](#) by Senator Brian Birdwell)

Since 2007, legislators have honored wounded veterans during a Wounded Warrior day ([SR 68](#) by Senator Leticia Van de Putte) at the Capitol. Recently, [six veterans](#) were honored on the floor of the Senate, including [Senator Brian Birdwell](#), a retired U.S. Army officer who was wounded in the September 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon.

To view all veteran-related bills that have been filed during the 83rd Regular Session, visit Texas Legislature Online and search directly under the subject [Military & Veterans \(I0535\)](#).

Did You Know?

There are [many monuments](#) on the Capitol grounds honoring veterans, but the newest monument will have its groundbreaking on March 25, 2013. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial will be located on the northeast side of the Capitol, near the Peace Officers Memorial, and will be dedicated this fall. [Click here](#) to learn more about the groundbreaking and see 3-D renderings of the monument.